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PROJECT
Contemporary
Historical
Evaluation of
Combat
Operations
REPORT

COIN IN THAILAND

January 1967 - December 1968

26 MARCH 1969

**APPROVED FOR
PUBLIC RELEASE**

HQ PACAF

**Directorate, Tactical Evaluation
CHECO Division**

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TSgt D. G. Francis
Project CHECO 7th AF, DOAC

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1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997; 277: 1039-1043.

1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2000; 284: 2689-2695.

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Figure 1

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PROJECT CHECO REPORTS

The counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare environment of Southeast Asia has resulted in the employment of USAF airpower to meet a multitude of requirements. The varied applications of airpower have involved the full spectrum of USAF aerospace vehicles, support equipment, and manpower. As a result, there has been an accumulation of operational data and experiences that, as a priority, must be collected, documented, and analyzed as to current and future impact upon USAF policies, concepts, and doctrine.

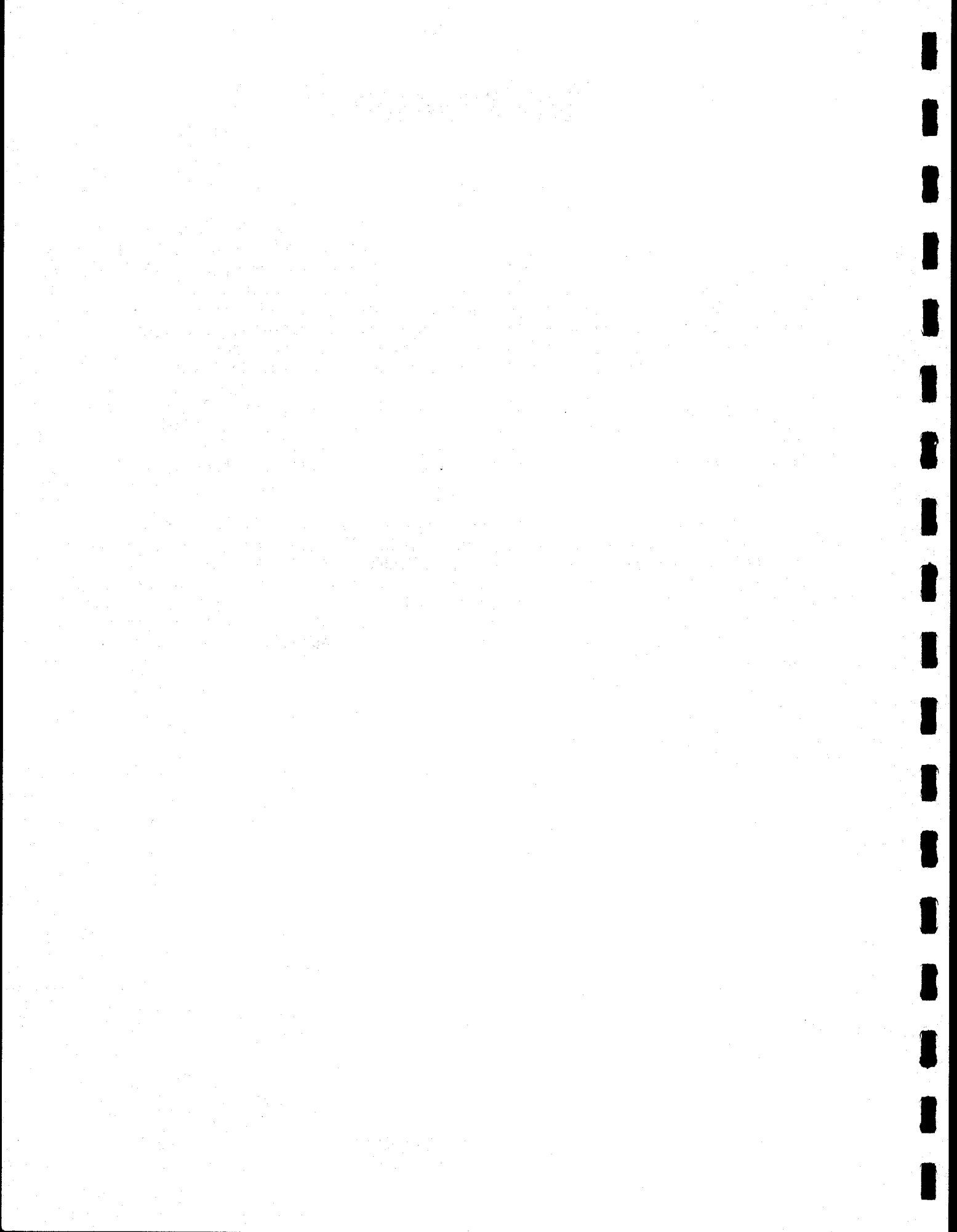
Fortunately, the value of collecting and documenting our SEA experiences was recognized at an early date. In 1962, Hq USAF directed CINCPACAF to establish an activity that would be primarily responsive to Air Staff requirements and direction, and would provide timely and analytical studies of USAF combat operations in SEA.

Project CHECO, an acronym for Contemporary Historical Evaluation of Combat Operations, was established to meet this Air Staff requirement. Managed by Hq PACAF, with elements at Hq 7AF and 7/13AF, Project CHECO provides a scholarly, "on-going" historical evaluation and documentation of USAF policies, concepts, and doctrine in Southeast Asia combat operations. This CHECO report is part of the overall documentation and evaluation which is being accomplished. Along with the other CHECO publications, this is an authentic source for an assessment of the effectiveness of USAF airpower in SEA.



MILTON B. ADAMS, Major General, USAF
Chief of Staff

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FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF


WARREN H. PETERSON, Colonel, USAF
Chief, CHECO Division
Directorate, Tactical Evaluation
DCS/Operations

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Proj CHECO Rpt (SNF),
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(11) AFXOTR	1
(12) AFXOTW	1
(13) AFXOTZ	1
(14) AFXPD	6

(a) AFXPPGS 3

3. MAJOR COMMANDS

a. TAC

(1) HEADQUARTERS

(a) DO	1
(b) DPL	2
(c) DOCC	1
(d) DORQ	1
(e) DIO	1

(2) AIR FORCES

(a) 9AF

1. DO	1
2. DP	1

(b) 12AF

1. DORF	1
2. DP	1
3. DI	1

(c) 19AF

1. DO	1
2. DP	1
3. DA-C	1

(d) USAFSOF

1. DO	1
2. DI	1

(3) AIR DIVISIONS

(a) 831AD(DO)	2
(b) 832AD(DO)	2
(c) 833AD(DDO)	2
(d) 835AD(DO)	2
(e) 836AD(DO)	2
(f) 838AD	

1. DO	1
2. DOCP	1

(g) 839AD(DO)	2
(h) 840AD(DO)	2

(4) WINGS

(a) 1SOW(DO)	1
(b) 4TFW(DO)	1
(c) 15TFW(DO)	1
(d) 23TFW(DOI)	1
(e) 27TFW(DOP)	1
(f) 33TFW(DOI)	1
(g) 49TFW(DCOI)	1
(h) 64TFW	1
(i) 67TRW(C)	1
(j) 75TRW(DO)	1
(k) 78FW(WGDC)	1
(l) 82CSPW(DOCH)	1
(m) 313TAW(DOPL)	1
(n) 316TAW(DOP)	1
(o) 317TAW(EX)	1
(p) 363TRW	1
(q) 464TAW(DO)	1
(r) 474TFW(TFOX)	1
(s) 479TFW	1
(t) 516TAW(DOPL)	1
(u) 4410CCTW(DOTR)	1
(v) 4442CCTW(DO)	1
(w) 4453CCTW(DO)	1
(x) 4500ABW(DO)	1
(y) 4510CCTW(DO16-I)	1
(z) 4525FWW(FWOA)	1

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(aa) 4531TFW(DOI) 1
(bb) 4554CCTW(DOI) 1

(5) TAC CENTERS, SCHOOLS

(a) USAFTAWC
 1. DA 2
(b) USAFTARC
 1. DID 2
(c) USAFTALC
 1. DCRL 2
(d) USAFTFWC
 1. CRCD 2
(e) USAFSOC(DO) 2
(f) USAFAGOS(DAB-C) . . 2

b. SAC

(1) HEADQUARTERS

(a) DOPL 1
(b) DPLF 1
(c) DM 1
(d) DI 1

(2) AIR FORCES

(a) 2AF(DICS) 1
(b) 8AF(C) 1
(c) 15AF 1

(3) AIR DIVISIONS

(a) 3AD(DO) 3

c. MAC

(1) HEADQUARTERS

(a) MAOID 1
(b) MAOCO 1
(c) MAFOI 1
(d) MACOA 1

(2) AIR FORCES

(a) 21AF
 1. ODC 1
 2. OCXI 1
(b) 22AF
 1. ODC 1
 2. OCXI 1

(3) AIR DIVISIONS

(a) 322AD 1

(4) WINGS

(a) 375AAWG
 1. ODC 1
(b) 89MAWG
 1. ODC 1
(c) 60MAWG
 1. ODC 1
 2. OXI 1
(d) 61MAWG
 1. ODC 1
 2. OIN 1

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(e) 62MAWG

1. OCXP 1
2. OOPT 1

(f) 63MAWG

1. O 1
2. OCXCI 1

(g) 435MAWG

1. ODC 1
2. OTI 1

(h) 436MAWG

1. O 1
2. OCXC 1

(i) 437MAWG

1. CCP 1
2. OCXI 1

(j) 438MAWG

1. ODC 1
2. OCXC 1

(k) 445MAWG

1. OC 1
2. WDO-PLI 1

(5) MAC SERVICES

(a) AWS

1. AWW 1
2. AFCSPI 1

(b) ARRS

1. ARXLR 1

(c) ACGS

1. AGOV 1

(d) AAVS

1. AVODOD 1

d. ADC

(1) HEADQUARTERS

(a) ADODC 1
(b) ADOOP 1
(c) ADOTT 1
(d) ADLCC 1

(2) AIR FORCES

(a) 1AF

1. DO 1
2. DP 1

(b) 4AF

1. DO 1
2. DP 1

(c) 10AF

1. ODC 1
2. PDP-P 1

(d) 14Aerosp Force

1. 14ODC-I 2

(e) AF Iceland 2

(3) AIR DIVISIONS

(a) 25AD 2
(b) 26AD(OIN) 2
(c) 27AD 2
(d) 28AD(OIN) 2
(e) 29AD(ODC) 2
(f) 31AD 2
(g) 32AD(ODC-A) 2
(h) 33AD(OIN) 2
(i) 34AD(OIN) 2
(j) 35AD(CCR) 2
(k) 36AD(OIN) 2
(l) 37AD(ODC) 2

e. ATC

(1) HEADQUARTERS

(a) ATXDC 1

f. AFLC

(1) HEADQUARTERS

(a) MCFH 1
(b) MCGH 1
(c) MCOO 1

g. AFSC

(1) HEADQUARTERS

(a) SCLAP 2
(b) SCS-6 1
(c) SCTPL 1
(d) SCEH 2
(e) ASD/ASJT 2
(f) ESD/ESWV 2
(g) ADTC/ADP 2
(h) RADC/EMOEL 2

h. AFCS

(1) HEADQUARTERS

(a) CSOCH 5

i. USAFSS

(1) HEADQUARTERS

(a) ODC 1
(b) CHO 5

(2) SUBORDINATE UNITS

(a) Eur Scty Rgn

1. OPD-P 1

(b) 6940 Scty Wg

1. OOD 1

j. AAC

(1) HEADQUARTERS

(a) ALDOC-A 2

k. USAFSO

(1) COH 1
(2) OOP 1

1. PACAF

(1) HEADQUARTERS

(a) DP 1
(b) DI 1
(c) DO 1
(d) DPL 4
(e) CSH 1
(f) DOTECH 6
(g) DE 1
(h) DM 1

(2) AIR FORCES

(a) 5AF

1. DOPP 1
2. DP 1

(b) 7AF

1. DO 1
2. DIXA 1
3. DPL 1
4. TACC 1
5. DOAC 2

(c) 13AF

1. DOO 1
2. DXIH 1
3. DPL 1

(d) 7AF/13AF

1. CHECO 3

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(3) AIR DIVISIONS

- (a) 313AD(DOP) . . . 2
- (b) 314AD(DOP) . . . 2
- (c) 327AD

- 1. DO 1
- 2. DI 1

(4) WINGS

- (a) 3TFW(DCOP) . . . 1
- (b) 9TFW(DCOA) . . . 1
- (c) 12TFW(DCOI) . . . 1
- (d) 14SOW(DCO) . . . 1
- (e) 31TFW(DCOA) . . . 1
- (f) 35TFW 1
- (g) 37TFW(DCOI) . . . 1
- (h) 56SOW 1
- (i) 315SOW(DCOI) . . . 1
- (j) 347TFW(DCOOT) . . . 1
- (k) 355TFW(DCOC) . . . 1
- (l) 366TFW 1
- (m) 388TFW(DCO) . . . 1
- (n) 405FW(DCOA) . . . 1
- (o) 432TRW(DCOI) . . . 1
- (p) 460TRW(DCOI) . . . 1
- (q) 475TFW(DCO) . . . 1
- (r) 483TAW(DCO) . . . 1
- (s) 553RW(DCOI) . . . 1
- (t) 633SOW 1
- (u) 6400 Test Sq . . . 1

(5) OTHER UNITS

- (a) Task Force ALPHA

- 1. DXI 1

- (b) 504TASG(CA) . . . 1

m. USAFE

(1) HEADQUARTERS

- (a) ODC/OA 1
- (b) ODC/OTA 1
- (c) OOT 1
- (d) XDC 1

(2) AIR FORCES

- (a) 3AF(ODC) 2
- (b) 16AF 2
- (c) 17AF

- 1. ODC 1
- 2. OID 1

(3) WINGS

- (a) 10TRW(OIN/50A) . . 1
- (b) 20TFW(CACC) . . . 1
- (c) 26TRW(C) 1
- (d) 36TFW(CADS) . . . 1
- (e) 48TFW(DCOTS) . . . 1
- (f) 50TFW(CACC) . . . 1
- (g) 66TRW(DCOIN-T) . . 1
- (h) 81TFW(DCO) 1
- (i) 401TFW(DCOI) . . . 1
- (j) 513TAW(OID) 1
- (k) 601TCW 1
- (l) 7101ABW(DCO-CP) . . 1
- (m) 7149TFW(DCOI) . . . 1
- (n) 7272FTW(CAAC) . . . 1

4. SEPARATE OPERATING AGENCIES

- a. AFAFC (SAA-12) 1
- b. AFSDC (HCAA) 2
- c. ACIC

- (1) ACOMC 2

- d. ARPC (RPCAS-22) 2
- e. AFRES

- (1) AFROP 2

- f. USAFA

- (1) CA 2
- (2) CMT 1
- (3) DFH 1

- g. AU

- (1) AUL(SE)-69-108 . . . 2
- (2) ASI (ASHAF-A) 2
- (3) ASI (ASD-1) 1
- (4) ACSC-SA 1

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5. MILITARY DEPARTMENTS, UNIFIED AND SPECIFIED COMMANDS, AND JOINT STAFFS

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b.	CINCLANT.	1
c.	USAFLANT.	1
d.	CHIEF, NAVAL OPERATIONS	1
e.	COMMANDANT, MARINE CORPS.	1
f.	CINCONAD.	1
g.	DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY.	1
h.	JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF	1
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j.	CINCPAC	1
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l.	CINCAFSTRIKE.	1
m.	USCINCMFAFSA.	1
n.	USCINCEUR	1
o.	COMUSFORAZ.	1
p.	COMUSJAPAN.	1
q.	COMUSKOREA.	1
r.	COMUSMACTHAI.	1
s.	COMUSMACV	1
t.	USCINCSO.	1
u.	COMUSTDC.	1
v.	CINCSSTRIKE.	1

6. SCHOOLS

a.	Senior USAF Rep, National War College	1
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c.	Senior USAF Rep, Armed Forces Staff College	1
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FOREWORD

"Counterinsurgency in Thailand 1967-1968" depicts the insurgent threat, Royal Thailand Government reaction, USAF assistance, and related situations. While Chapter I profiles the complexity of the threat to Thailand, other phases describe aggressive attempts to counter this problem. Significantly, USAF's phase-down policy is discussed in Chapter VI.

This study is the second CHECO report devoted to counterinsurgency in Thailand. The first study, "Counterinsurgency in Thailand - 1966", addressed the situation prevalent at that time, whereas the current volume examines events in 1967 and 1968.

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CHAPTER I
THREAT OF INSURGENCY

"The most authoritative statement of communist plans for Thailand was contained in an estimate by the CPT (Communist Party of Thailand) in 1965. The estimate indicated the communists envision that a ten-year struggle, culminating in victory in 1975, will be required to achieve their objective in Thailand."

*--Maj. Gen. Charles R. Bond, Jr.
Deputy Commander, 7AF/13AF*

The most obvious manifestation of insurgent activity in Thailand during 1967 and 1968 was the number of incidents, clashes, and harassments reported by the Thais. The evaluation of these reports in purely statistical form, however, can be misleading for at least three reasons: (1) The Thai reporting system frequently did not differentiate between types of encounters, e.g., whether initiated by Royal Thai Government (RTG) forces or by communists^{1/}; (2) The number of clashes did not necessarily indicate the level of activity (two examples were clandestine operations such as recruiting and propaganda meetings, which sought to avoid contact with governmental forces, and the fact that an area held secure by Communist terrorists reported no incidents)^{2/}; and (3) The source of the grass roots reports was sometimes questionable and even the identity of the illegal group (communist or bandit?) was often in doubt.^{3/} The Thai, in fact, tended to lump all criminal acts under the category "subversive".

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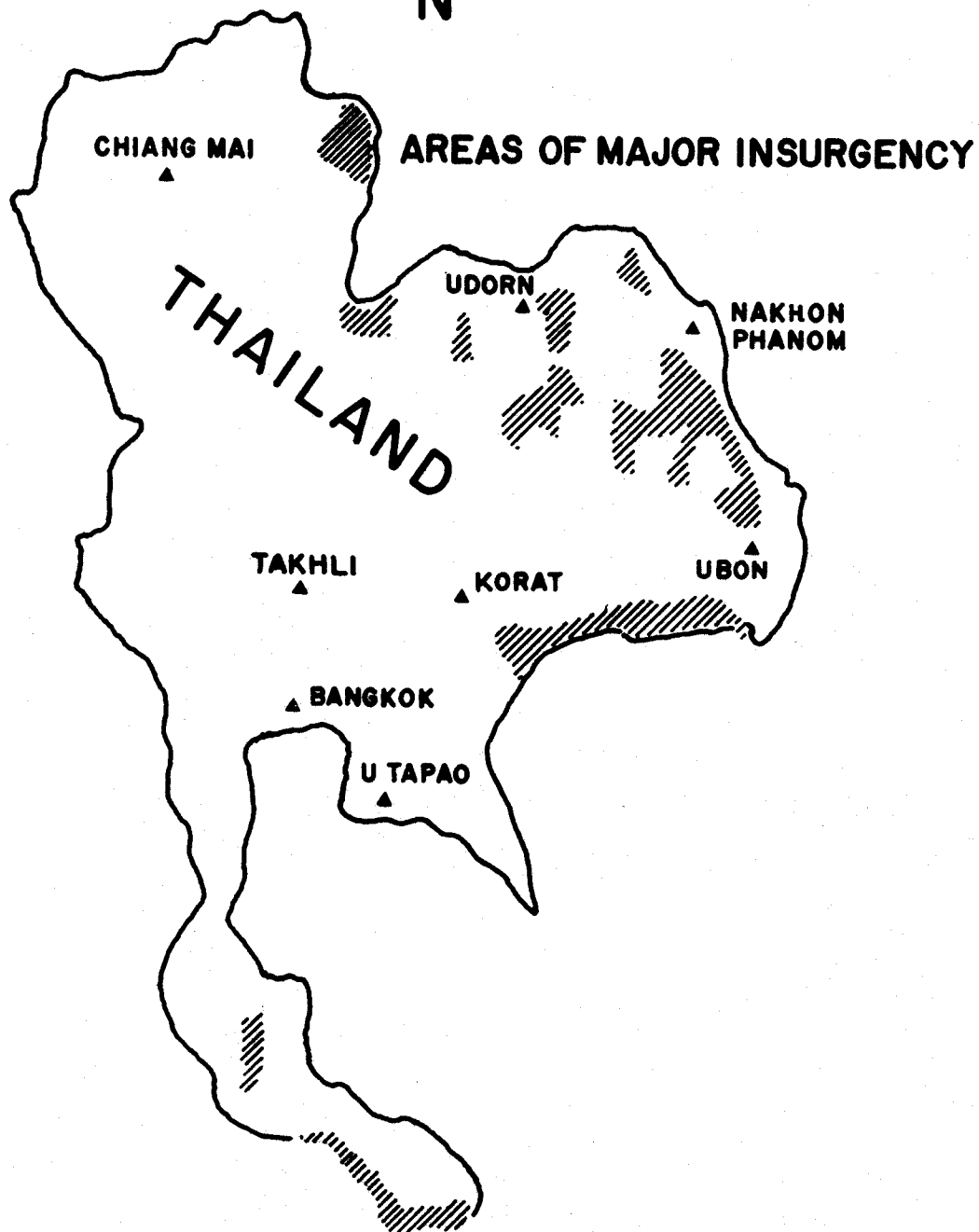
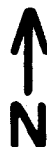
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Other evidence of the insurgent movement was often no less tangible, while offering more accurate proof of both short and long-range (communist) plans. Captured documents sometimes shed light on organizational structure of guerrilla groups and the current phase of communist operations. Propaganda broadcasts were also used to determine, to some extent, what the insurgents' organizational strength might be and at what level of militancy they were prepared to harass governmental operations. But the best barometer was held by many experts to be the purely qualitative one of sensing village attitudes, and determining the extent to which local peoples would support the CTs.^{4/} Admittedly, this approach could be misleading because villagers were prone to "sympathize" with whatever force appeared to be the de facto government in the area.^{5/} Nevertheless, the highly subjective process of feeling the pulse of the village, as it were, did appear to be the more accurate measure of communist insurgent activity; and that fact was indicative of the difficulty of pinpointing the extent and complexity of the communist effort in Thailand.

Existence of a communist insurgency threat in Thailand could not be argued. A formal political structure of the Communist Political Party (CPT) had been in existence since 1942 (although communists were operating in Thailand as early as 1927). The insurgency, however, made little headway until 1961, when the CPT convened the third session of its Representative Assembly near Bangkok. According to Maj. Gen. W. C. Lindley, Deputy Commander, 7AF/13AF, from June 1967 to June 1968:^{6/}

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FIGURE 1



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"It was at this assembly that the foundations were laid for the present subversive and guerrilla campaign in Thailand."

There were four conspicuous areas of insurgency in Thailand (Fig. 1), each of which contained an infrastructure. Although some direction appeared to come from the CPT in Bangkok, and possibly from Hanoi and Peking through their Embassies in Vientiane, there appeared to be little coordination among groups.^{7/}

NORTHEAST: The primary area of insurgency had historically been in the Northeast. The most highly organized groups were thought to be the Vietnamese refugees and the Thai-Lao ethnic group.^{8/} In the latter part of 1968, reports from the Northeast indicated that although the actual number of incidents remained relatively stable, the large bands of CTs which opposed RTG forces during 1967 had been forced to break up or shift operations to new areas. Reports of food collections, sightings of smaller groups, and more emphasis upon terrorism and propaganda indicated that the CTs had been forced to resort to less ambitious tactics.^{9/} Estimates of the number of guerrillas ranged between 1,200 and 1,600. Sympathizers were said to number as many as 7,000.

NORTH: An intercept of a broadcast of the Voice of the People of Thailand revealed that the CTs consider 8 May as the anniversary of communist insurgency in the North. The broadcast said the insurgents began their struggle on 8 May 1967 at Chom Phy Hill, Thoeng District, Chiang Rai Province.^{10/} Actually, the CPT had been working

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with the northern tribal people for several years and had managed to extend its influence over a number of villages. A cadre of an estimated 300 hard-core communists was said to control a large faction of dissident (Meo and Yao) hill tribes in the North. The fact that RTG forces were stymied during the latter part of 1968 by these fierce tribesmen was indicated by the kill ratio, which was in the CTs' favor. Reports indicated that Pathet Lao and NVN units in Laos were lending active support to the Northern insurgents.^{11/} During the latter part of 1968, it became evident that North Thailand had replaced the Northeast as the primary staging area for communist insurgency. This change may have been due in part to the successful RTG push, beginning in January 1967, which forced the Northeast CTs to break up and disperse. Also, the RTG's historic indifference toward, and sometimes outright persecution of the hill tribes, coupled with communist promises for a place in a "New Government of Thailand", was enough to induce a large percentage of hill people to direct their interests toward the left. Reports indicated that several hundred Meos had received guerrilla warfare training at Sam Neua and Muong, Laos.^{12/}

WEST-CENTRAL/MIDSOUTH: Government suppression operations during late 1966 and early 1967 disrupted CT activity to a considerable extent.^{13/} RTG security agencies demonstrated that they could effectively control CT activity in this region. The CPT was content to direct its activities to other regions of the country, and generally limited actions in the West-Central/Midsouth area to occasional assassinations of informants and turncoats.^{14/}

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ETHNIC GROUPS

TIBETO-BURMAN

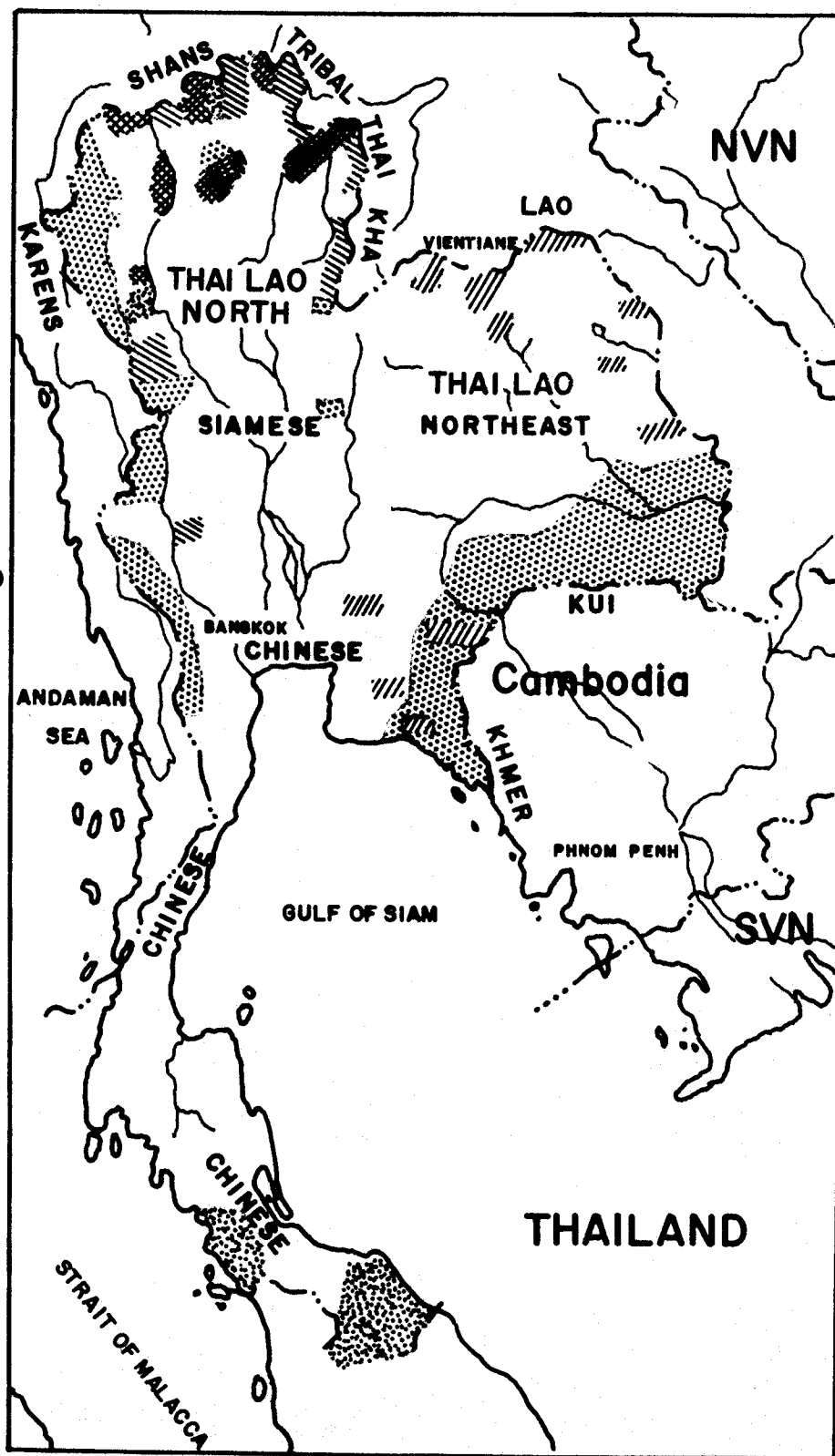
-  KAREN
-  LAMU (MUSSO)
-  LISU (LISSU)
-  AKHA (KAW)

MON-KHMER

-  KHA (PHOUTNENG)
-  KHMER (CAMBODIAN)
-  KUI
-  LAWA (WA)

MISCELLANEOUS

-  ME0 (MIAO)
-  YAO (MAN)
-  VIETNAMESE (ANNAMENSE)
-  MALAY



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FIGURE 2

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



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SOUTH: The Communist Terrorist Organization (CTO) of South Thailand called itself the "Malayan Races Liberation Army". For ten years, it had conducted training activities in the South, dictating the party line and recruiting as many Sino-Thai as would listen.^{15/} With the conclusion of a "hot pursuit" agreement between the Thai and Malaysian governments in 1968, the border was no longer a sanctuary for this particular group of insurgents.^{16/} Of growing concern in the South, near the end of 1968, were the dissident Moslems who had apparently joined with the communists, not in ideological conviction, but because they sought autonomy from the Buddhist-oriented government of Thailand. The CTO apparently welcomes this partnership irrespective of the religious orientation of the Moslem group.

Despite this broad picture of CT activity in four separate areas of Thailand, it was generally conceded that the current and continuing number of dissident (communist) Thai citizens was small.^{17/} Without outside assistance (Pathet Lao, Hanoi, Peking), at least in the areas of training and personnel, the insurgency movement could not have withstood the strain of RTG suppression operations.

The underlying causes of the communists' recruiting problems were as complex as the ethnic groups which resided in the "rice bowl of the Orient". For the Thais themselves, they were a free people. The very word Thai meant free. Only the Burmese and the Japanese had ever been able to occupy Thailand militarily in the thousand years of Siamese influence. While the British and French struggled

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for the rest of Indo-China, they agreed that Thailand should remain independent; the Thais themselves were in no small measure responsible for that.^{18/} Hence, the reaction to colonialism, so strong and so violent elsewhere in the world, simply had no catalyst. There was no base of hard-core dissidents, such as the Viet Minh in Vietnam, on which the communists could build. Therefore, recruitment had to begin almost from the ground up.

Thailand's nickname, "the rice bowl of the Orient", gave a clue to another obstacle in the recruitment efforts of the Communist revolutionaries. While the Thai peasant was poor, particularly in the North-Northeast where the heaviest communist concentration was reported, he was not starving. At the time, Thailand was second only to Burma in the production and exportation of rice.^{19/} Generally, food and shelter were available to even the poorest. RTG counterinsurgency efforts in 1967 and 1968 (covered in Chapter Six) tended to make recruiting even more difficult for the CTs.

A final factor in the Thai's reluctance to adopt the communist cause was somewhat more nebulous. The Thais were called the "cheerful people" of the Orient. They had not known the bitter struggle, which had been the day-to-day life for the Vietnamese since 1939, and were not inclined to militancy or violence. In addition, their brand of Buddhism, being more devout than other sects, had a more pervasive effect on their daily lives.^{20/} Too, the lack of colonial occupation had spared them the comparison of affluency between East and West. Thus, the lust for

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material wealth, which fed the fires of discontent in almost every other country of the world, grew but slowly and sporadically in Thailand-- and then only with the help of her Communist neighbors.

In the Northeast, where insurgency began, the majority of the people were not Thai but Laotian. Among these, some 50,000 Vietnamese and 15,000 Chinese lived more or less homogeneously.^{21/} Recruitment of these peoples into the communist camp was said to be somewhat easier than among the Thai. However, even among these latter groups, who were not permitted Thai citizenship and sometimes felt the sting of government-sanctioned prejudice, the communists had their recruiting problems.

The Laotians, it must be remembered, were not merely related to the Thais; they were, in fact, of the same ethnic stock. The creation of the artificial state of Laos by M. Auguste Pavie for the French commercial empire is still "celebrated" in Thailand as a national disgrace.^{22/} Laos was considered by the Thais to be part and parcel of Thailand itself. In fact, the question of just what a Laotian is has occupied scholars for some time.^{23/} Therefore, the distinction between Thai and Thai-Lao was more political than real. Thus, the same considerations, which made it difficult for the communists to recruit Thais, also held true for the Laotians. The fact that the Pathet-Lao was the same ethnic type as the Thai-Lao, was irrelevant to the socio-economic aspects of Thailand.

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The Vietnamese in Northeast Thailand were the next largest group and the most suspect, since they migrated principally from North Vietnam during the 1944-1947 clash between the French and the Viet Minh. They were said to lean toward Hanoi and some were accused of hiding pictures of Ho Chi Minh. But the motive for their immigration, e.g., to avoid the French/Viet conflict, indicated their reluctance to become personally involved and risk their property in a cause as all-consuming as communism. Also, there appeared to be a lack of open Vietnamese support of the insurgency movement.^{24/} The number of sympathizers as opposed to activists could only be surmised. It appeared likely, however, a high percentage of NVN immigrants would have been sympathetic to a communist regime in Thailand but cool to active participation in a violent revolution.

The Chinese, who were relatively small in number in the Northeast, with a considerably larger population in the South and around Bangkok, were basically artisans and entrepreneurs; hardly the breeding-ground for hard-core "Charlies". However, this group was ideally situated for clandestine operations of a somewhat higher level. There was some evidence that the Chinese were among those Communist sympathizers who were programmed to assume key positions in the eventuality of a communist take-over in Thailand. The Communist Party of Thailand, centered at Bangkok, was thought to consist predominantly of Chinese. Both Chinese and Viets were being used in positions of leadership; many were said to have been trained in Vietnam and Communist China.^{25/}

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Among the many ethnic groupings in Thailand were various hill tribes of aborigines, peoples who had never fully accepted Siamese rule and who had traditionally formed guerrilla bands for their perennial war with the plainspeople. Among these was a group of tribes known as the Meos. They were an especially fierce and warlike people who were being used by the communists to conduct much of the overt and aggressive campaign against the government in the North.^{26/} It was unlikely that many of these people were ideologically communistic, since the concept was probably too sophisticated for their comprehension, even though political indoctrination was said to have been included in the curriculum at the Sam Neua and Muong training centers.^{27/} However, the communists found recruitment of Meos most lucrative, because these fierce people had never been assimilated into Siamese culture. The RTG often over-reacted to communist inspired Meo activities for the same reason,^{28/} thus reinforcing communist propaganda and the Meo determination to control the rugged hill-country along the northern border of Thailand. The communists' ability to recruit Meos, or at least to use the tribesmen to harass government operations, was dramatically demonstrated during the last quarter of 1968, when the North was used to replace the Northeast as their major staging area. Intelligence officials were impressed by the professionalism displayed by the new organization in the North.^{29/}

It could not be said that the communist threat in Thailand was impotent, or even that it was regressing. It was obvious that some

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ethnic Thai were involved in insurgency efforts. Reports also indicated that Chinese and Vietnamese types were among the uniformed "jungle fighters". Repeated reports of Pathet Lao and NVN infiltrators again manifested the need of local communists for outside help, not so much for materials as for trained, ideologically hard-core assistance.

Two things became obvious in the light of the communist terrorists' own recruitment problems: (1) the RTG was capable of handling truly internal dissidency, particularly in view of its growing sophistication in the realms of COIN-combat readiness and accelerated civic actions; and (2) the communists could not hope to go beyond the current phase of fragmented guerrilla operations without extensive outside help.

It is difficult to document the extent of outside help received by CTs during the period of this study, or to prognosticate future developments because: (1) few infiltration estimates were available nor were they reliable; and (2) much depended upon communist success in Laos and Vietnam. If the problem were weighed against recruitment difficulties as cited, and the fact that guerrilla activity remained fragmented, then it could be assumed that conflicts in Vietnam and Laos drained communist resources to such an extent that they were not prepared to escalate operations in Thailand. Again, presumably, any Laos/Vietnam settlement favorable to the communists could portend large-scale entry of Communist forces into Thailand. In June 1968, according to Maj. Gen. W.C. Lindley, Jr.:^{30/}

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"Although terrorist initiatives (in Thailand) have been somewhat retarded by government military pressure, there is ominous portent for Thailand in recent Laotian developments. If the current epidemic of communist successes in Laos continues unchecked, the situation in Thailand could be altered drastically. A hostile, Communist-dominated Laos would open the flood gates of support to the Thai insurgent movement.

"The state-of-the-art in South Vietnam was equally cogent: A suspected member of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) Central Committee said that a settlement in Vietnam would not mean the end of revolution in Thailand, and that policy aims of the CPT, including the elimination of Americans, would continue. Following the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam, the suspect believed there would be more outside support available to the CPT.

"Thai forces, however, encountered no Pathet Lao or Viet Minh units during 1967 or 1968. Reports of mass infiltration of Communist troops continued to be received without verification. U.S. intelligence sources believe small groups may have infiltrated across the Mekong River to act as advisors or leaders of Thai (Communist) groups."

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CHAPTER II

THE AMERICAN PRESENCE

"Since the Americans have invaded and occupied Thailand and used it as their base for aggression, they have brought disaster to the nation and the people. U.S. soldiers have not only barbarously trampled upon the nation's sovereignty and independence, they have also caused severe hardships for the Thai people. They have debased our society. This is why people have expanded their resistance against them."

--Voice of the People of Thailand Broadcast

If Thailand were a prime target for communist insurgency before the mid-sixties, two developments made her all the more ripe for infiltration and subversion: (1) increased RTG commitment to anticommunism in general, and the Vietnamese/Laotian conflicts in particular; and (2) the concurrent establishment and expansion of American facilities in Thailand. A direct corollary might be drawn between these two events and the estimated accelerated volume of communist activity in Thailand.^{1/}

The American presence in Thailand aided and abetted Communist propagandists in at least two ways: (1) The presence of American military men, no matter how benign, tended to confirm the communist contention that the United States had "occupied" Thailand; and (2) the well-meaning but free-spending American tended to create some of the same problems engendered by the presence of "farang"* in a colonial

**Thai word meaning foreigner with no connotation of imperialistic interference in domestic affairs.*

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environment, i.e., making visible the disparity between indigenous living standards and "imperialist" spending power. Wherever Americans had direct contact with Thais, particularly at the lower levels, it must be assumed that such contact in some degree whetted materialistic appetites, thus lighting the spark of discontent. That this malaise reached the upper stratum of Thai society was amply demonstrated by a cable from U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, Leonard Unger, to the Secretary of State in February 1968:^{2/}

"We are in the midst of renewed Thai sensitivity to and concern over various aspects of the large U.S. presence in Thailand, which we believe exceeds in intensity that experienced early in the 1965-1966 buildup and which we judge may be more enduring and difficult to contain... Though we do not, thus far, see meaningful indicators of anti-Americanism, we are convinced on the basis of spontaneous comments as well as inquiries across entire range of mission contacts that we are experiencing a loss of pro-Americanism in Thailand. Halting the erosion promises to be a difficult task...."

Base surveys indicated the nagging complaints of local residents in several areas. Persistent complaints, including those mentioned by the U.S. Ambassador, were:^{3/}

- . Fear of inadvertent bombing.
- . Noise levels of jet take offs and landings including sonic booms.
- . Undermining of Thai customs such as the open display of affection shown by American men for Thai Girls. (Thai custom forbids heterosexual displays of passion/affection in public.)
- . Too visible and audible concentration of cheap entertainment spots in the much discussed "strips". (The landlord/commercial group which profited from all this was understandably if regrettably silent.)

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- The growing number of American-fathered children and high VD rates near bases.
- Competition with upperclass Thai for goods, services, and facilities, with resulting price rises.

All levels of command were concerned with problems created by the steady increase in the number of U.S. personnel and the lengthening duration of this large, visible presence in centers of Thai population. The Commander, Thirteenth Air Force (who was responsible for personnel/logistic support to USAF forces in Thailand), issued instructions regarding recreation facilities, emphasizing the U.S. military presence continued at the pleasure of the Thais.^{4/}

If the military presence in Thailand created problems in U.S. relations with law-abiding Thais, it also invited violent reaction on the part of dissidents and their supporters. The NVN Foreign Ministry announced in April 1967, after learning that B-52 bombers would be stationed at U-Tapao, Thailand: "The NVN people reserve the right to take appropriate action against this aggressive war act of the U.S. and its Thai Agents."^{5/}

The first detailed report of impending attack on a U.S. military unit came early in 1967. The source was of unconfirmed reliability and the attack never came off.^{6/} As communist activity grew in the Northeast during 1967, threats to U.S. forces multiplied. In a message to the Deputy Commander at Udorn on 30 January 1967, the Ambassador authorized "the maximum exchange between U.S. and RTG officials of information on security threats to Thai bases", because it was the RTG which was responsible for base security.^{7/}

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In April 1967, a "fairly reliable" source reported that a meeting of ten Vietnamese Communists had been held on 16 March to discuss sabotaging Udorn Air Base. The meeting reportedly selected two possible courses of action: (1) have base employees penetrate areas such as petroleum and ammunition storage facilities and commit sabotage; or (2) start insurgent groups in the vicinity and have them dispatch a team to infiltrate the base and start fires with incendiary projectiles. Intelligence officials evaluated the threat as "probably true but not immediate".^{8/}

It must be noted that this was only one of many reports of impending attacks on U.S. installations. Its relevancy should be judged with that in mind, as well as no attack having occurred against any U.S. installation until more than a year later, despite the fact that U.S. officials were not satisfied the RTG could adequately handle base defense. Internal base security was the responsibility of the RTG, with USAF security personnel ostensibly concerned with only "the internal security of primary USAF resources".^{9/} In practical application, however, USAF security forces were providing base-wide coverage.^{10/} External base defense satisfied U.S. officials even less. Several different agencies within the RTG were assigned to external security of several different areas. There appeared to be little or no coordination among the various external security forces or between those forces and the agency charged with internal security. According to General Lindley in June 1968:^{11/}

"Base defense measures are sadly lacking on the part of the Royal Thai Government. There is basically no hope of achieving a coordinated internal/external defense force for the foreseeable future."

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During the Tet Holiday offensive by the Viet Cong in January-February, 1968, Ambassador Unger believed the threat to U.S. installations in Thailand had reached serious proportions. In a message to all Thai bases, he said:^{12/}

"Ensure that all elements under your command are on the alert for possible attacks in Thailand. Recently there have been a number of reports, mostly quite low level, of possible attacks, either by air, or by mortar, or other means, against military installations in Thailand... Even though we have no solid information regarding such plans, we cannot afford to take any unnecessary risk that could be avoided by alert or security action taken now...."

Throughout 1967 and 1968, it was generally believed that insurgents had the capability of carrying out their threats against U.S. installations in Thailand. Although the dangers of air attacks and mass infiltration were not ignored, it was believed the greatest threat came from the possibility of insurgent action. The insurgents were considered to have capabilities for the following violent actions:^{13/}

- Violence against individuals or small groups of personnel.
- Sabotage of bases and facilities.
- Mortar (or similar) attacks on USAF bases or facilities.
- Ground team penetration of bases.

Until the attack on Udorn on 26 July 1968, there was much conjecture as to why the CTs declined to translate their capability into action.^{14/} According to General Lindley:^{15/}

"Thai insurgents have the current (June 68) capability to conduct sabotage as well as damaging hit and run"

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raids against U.S. military installations. However, the decision to embark on this course of action has apparently been deferred for political or unknown reasons."

The insurgent capability cited by General Lindley was not a newly evolved one. Maj. Gen. C. R. Bond, his predecessor, also mentioned its potential in his debriefing statement of 25 May 1967^{16/} but said, "We accord a low order of probability to the chance of major sabotage, or overt, organized attacks on USAF facilities."

Until and after the July assault, the insurgents seemed to consciously avoid overt attacks on American installations or personnel, except for unconfirmed reports of minor sabotage. Tire puncturing devices had been found on several occasions at Nakhon Phanom and U-Tapao. Intelligence officials generally believed that most incidents of this type were instigated by dissident laborers, rather than political subversives. However, subversive involvement could not be ruled out in the light of broadcasts by "Voice of the People of Thailand", which said the tire puncturing devices were "examples of the resistance of the Thai people to the American presence in Thailand".

On another front, the most concrete evidence of organized espionage activity was uncovered at U-Tapao RTAFB in May 1968, with the procurement of professional photographs of USAF B-52 bombers on the ground and taking off with the bomb load in full view.

Cases were also cited by intelligence officials of village propaganda meetings in the Northeast where terrorists actually avoided USAF Medical Civic Action personnel located in the same village.^{17/} On one occasion, an

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invitation to attend a propaganda meeting was sent to the medical NCO, but no violence was offered when he declined.

Late in 1968, reports warning of imminent attacks against U.S. and Thai bases continued unabated. Intelligence officials were at a loss to explain why overt attacks were limited to the isolated assault on Udorn and the minor reports of sabotage in the face of these continuing threats.^{18/} Some officials believed the threats were in reality propaganda efforts aimed at the morale of the CTs themselves and the villagers on whom they depended for support. An example was a September 1968 report which told of the supposed infiltration of a North Vietnamese special sabotage unit with the objective of hitting Nakhon Phanom RTAFB.^{19/} The unit was said to possess 122-mm rockets, similar to those used against Saigon. In early September, Laotian Communists used the report to impress villagers in an area north of Thakhek, Laos, across the Mekong from Nakhon Phanom Province. The terrorists said they would no longer have to get close to the target to strike, and with this new power "the villagers had better forget about helping the government and come over to the communist side". The threatened attack did not materialize during 1968.^{20/}

As late as June 1967, intelligence officials believed that any overt attack on a USAF installation would be confined to the use of mortars. It was believed an armed infiltration of bases could be performed by the terrorists only with skilled Chinese or North Vietnamese teams infiltrated for a specific mission.^{21/} However, even before the Udorn assault, intelligence sources pointed out that the problem in determining the degree of threat at

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any given time was two-fold: (1) the extent to which the terrorists had the capability to attack; and (2) the circumstances under which they would embark on any of the various courses of action open to them.^{22/}

By 1968, there was little doubt of the CTs' capabilities, but U.S. officials still felt the communists were not strategically ready for such overt action against the American presence. It was thought that the policy of avoiding direct attacks on U.S. personnel/facilities was a high level stratagem. It was believed that the communists probably feared US/RTG reaction including the possibility of retaliatory strikes against Laos or North Vietnam (prior to the bombing halt). Also, it was believed the communists were much more interested in building their infrastructure.^{23/} According to General Bond:^{24/} "We believe that the terrorist leadership has a strong negative motivation towards acts that would threaten the somewhat fragile infrastructure."

Whether the attack on Udorn indicated a change in the hands-off policy could not be determined from available intelligence. That the attack was not followed up by similar assaults at NKP, U-Tapao, etc., suggested:

(1) That the base infiltration at Udorn in July was initiated at low-level without and perhaps contrary to, orders from higher up the communist hierarchy; or

(2) The attack was a test of base security measures and/or US/RTG reaction.

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Perhaps the most cogent prognosis for the future of U.S. installations in Thailand was contained in an intelligence estimate in April 1968: ^{25/}

"The threat to U.S. bases and presence in Thailand remains high. If the Paris 'peace talks' should collapse or reach an impasse, it is highly possible some retaliatory action would be taken against USAF bases in Thailand. Such action could also be a final act of defiance before the actual cessation of open hostilities in SEA."

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CHAPTER III

PHANTOM TRACKS

"After making all possible deductions for electronic aberrations, it seems that some as yet unidentified air activity has been taking place over northeast Thailand. The nature of this activity is still subject to speculation."

-- Maj. Gen. Charles R. Bond

Throughout 1967 and 1968, the Royal Thai Government was convinced that indigenous insurgents were being supplied by air from Laos or NVN. Through the last months of 1968, during a fierce battle with the Meo hill people, officials within the RTG insisted that Laotian helicopters were being used to infiltrate troops and resupply the local terrorists.^{1/}

Supporting the RTG's contention were the large number of unknown tracks (radar sightings that could not be correlated with flight plans or position reports) and reports of unidentified aircraft by ground observers. Intensive investigation by the USAF and RTAF, however, failed to produce a single contact which could be categorized as definitely hostile.^{2/}

Investigation among the Thai/US agencies concerned with air traffic control and air defense indicated that many tracks were reported as unidentified because of:

- Poor communications.
- Haphazard reporting procedures.
- Flight crew carelessness in flight plan variations.

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- Faulty radios.
- Non-adherence to flight communications instructions.
- Failure to file flight-plans or late plans.
- Improper or no position reports.
- Lack of coordination.

Reports by ground observers of unidentified aircraft were investigated along with radar sightings but were accorded little credence by U.S. officials because: (1) observers were almost invariably untrained or of questionable reliability; and (2) investigation failed to produce a contact which could be categorized as definitely hostile.

During General Lindley's tenure as Deputy Commander, 7AF/13AF, an Air Defense Steering Committee, chaired by the 7AF/13AF Director of Operations, was provided at the request of the RTAF Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations. The purpose of the committee was to "bring about changes in procedures and equipment to solve the unacceptable unknown traffic in Thailand airspace".^{3/} Meetings were conducted bimonthly; they resulted in a series of published directives which corrected some of the haphazard reporting procedures among Thai/US agencies. For a period of several months, until the directives lost their immediacy, unknowns were reduced to about three percent of all traffic originally reported as unidentified.^{4/}

Despite the lack of concrete evidence that Thailand's airspace was being violated by hostile traffic, U.S. intelligence officials could not eliminate that possibility. The fact remained that even during the period of maximum identification some traffic was never conclusively identified. However, U.S.

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officials were inclined to believe the remaining unidentified tracks could be accounted for by:

- Friendlies without flight plans on assigned missions: (Thai Army or Border Police).
- Friendlies on clandestine missions: (among these would be illegal but not insurgent smuggling of gold and narcotics).
- Weather phenomena.
- Kites or balloons (the releasing of balloons at Wat festivals [Buddhist celebrations centered around the local temple], and regional fairs and participation in the national sport of kite flying complicates the already saturated* air space.)

There were three cogent arguments against the theory of air support for Thai insurgents. First, the ease of ground infiltration across the Mekong made the investment of helicopters seem unlikely in view of the risks involved as compared to the slight possible dividends. (The lack of helicopter activity in SVN and Central Laos tended to bear this out.)^{5/} Secondly, interrogations of high-level insurgents indicated that Thai preoccupation with the supposed CT helicopters was a source of amusement and ridicule. They claimed CTs had neither the physical means nor the technology to employ aircraft within the Thai Air Defense System. The informers also confirmed the theory that sympathizers would not run the risk of losing equipment as

* In recent years, air traffic over Thailand has increased more rapidly than sophistication in air traffic control. RTG agencies employ helicopters for survey and research work; private corporations are using helicopters and light aircraft in projects involving geodetic studies, agricultural experiments, irrigation and dam building; and USAF and RTAF sorties have increased considerably.

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expensive as helicopters "when land and water travel is cheaper, safer, easier, and much more satisfactory".^{6/} Finally, after years of reported sightings and intensive investigation, no contact was ever identified as definitely hostile. This was true despite sorties having been scrambled for virtually every reported "unknown", and the RTAF frequently forced down unidentified aircraft to conduct search and seizure operations. In all cases, these aircraft were found to be friendlies.^{7/}

Despite these arguments, U.S. officials continued to investigate the "phantom tracks" with wary skepticism, while the RTG went through several stages of near-hysteria. In a letter to General Bond on 26 August 1966, Air Chief Marshal Boon Choo Chandrubeksa "authorized the destruction of unknown aircraft or helicopters by USAF aircraft, when requested by the RTAF Air Operations Center (AOC)".^{8/} While the Deputy Commander "sat" on the letter, Marshal Boon Choo became restive.

On 16 December 1966, Air Marshals Kamol and Pravati and Vice Air Marshal Panieng met with (USAF) Colonel Jack W. Hayes who was acting in General Bond's absence. They queried him about 7AF/13AF plans relative to unknowns. In his letter of 6 January 1967 to Ambassador Graham A. Martin, Colonel Hayes reported on the meeting:^{9/}

"In response to their questions about 7AF/13AF plans I explained the T-28 flare ship tactics which were developed by the 606th ACS and are being taught to the RTAF Composite Squadrons. Some interest was expressed but the opinion was raised that the USAF had much better capability and Marshal Kamol asked if I was aware of Marshal Boon Choo's letter and if I understood that USAF aircraft had been instructed

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to attack when directed by the AOC. Without committing myself to the direct question, I explained that our Air Defense Forces throughout the world were always required to make positive identification, except under the highest conditions of Air Defense Readiness. This only partially sufficed and I was informed that Marshal Boon Choo desired written acknowledgment of these procedures."

As a result of that meeting, on 16 December 1966, Air Vice Marshal Chalerm Divaveja wrote to General Bond: ^{10/}

"The RTAF would greatly appreciate it if you would kindly acknowledge the receipt of the referred letter and confirm it in writing that the USAF aircraft when intercepting unknown aircraft or helicopters over Thailand territory will destroy the said aircraft or helicopter as soon as being requested by the RTAF (AOC)."

RTAF anxiety over this question was further demonstrated a week later when Colonel Hayes was again approached on the subject. In a letter to Lt. Gen. William W. Momyer, then Seventh Air Force Commander, Colonel Hayes reported this latest incident: ^{11/}

"On the night of 25 December 1966, I was in the TACC monitoring Air Defense activity resulting from several unknown tracks in the Nakhon Phanom area. RTAF T-28's and a C-47 flare ship were attempting intercept and F-102's had been scrambled, holding out of the area for possible use. In addition a 606th ACS T-28, airborne on Base Security, was also being held. Marshal Paitoon, through the AOC, specifically asked if I would order USAF aircraft to fire on the unknowns if requested by the AOC. Rather than directly answering, I stated that positive identification should first be acquired in order to ascertain the nature of the threat. I also informed him that the T-28 was armed only with flares and that the F-102's were incapable of attaining lock-on and firing at the target speeds being plotted. This appeared to satisfy him, but the issue is obviously an active one."

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The RTAF's helicopter-mania reached its pinnacle on 10 October 1967 when Thai newspapers carried a story that Air Chief Marshal Boon Choo Chandrubeksa had offered a reward of 200,000 baht (about \$10,000) "for the destruction of unknown aircraft". The newspaper account was followed up by an announcement on 12 October by Deputy Prime Minister General Praphas Charusathien that Communist insurgents in Thailand were being supported with "large Soviet-built helicopters" from out-country.^{12/} Thai officials would be sent into the jungle areas, he said, where the supposed Soviet helicopters were operating "to teach the villagers how to destroy them and collect the 200,000 baht reward". Neither villagers nor field forces were trained in aircraft recognition, although pictures of Soviet-built helicopters were among the materials to be disseminated.

Predictably, incidents of ground fire against friendly aircraft began to proliferate in October. Of three reported incidents that month, two were later found to be Thai Border Police helicopters; one was an USAF CH-53 Jolly Green. The CH-53 was clearly marked with a USAF insignia.^{13/}

U.S. intelligence officials assumed that such incidents would continue apace with the emotional intensity of the helicopter scare. The reward announced by Marshal Boon Choo aggravated the problem created by the establishment in September of a "free gun" or "free fire" zone; Thai Army AAA units in the Mukdahan area were instructed to fire on all aircraft flying below 4,000 feet during the hours of darkness. By the first of November, the zone had been extended to include most of Northeast Thailand, and the prescribed minimum altitude was raised to 8,000 feet.^{14/}

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Ground fire incidents continued until March of 1968. In that month, no incidents were reported. Intelligence officials believed that a "contributing factor" was the rescinding of the 200,000 baht reward for downing an unidentified aircraft or helicopter.^{15/}

Throughout the period (from October 1967 until March 1968), only one incident of ground fire was thought to have been initiated by CTs. All other incidents were almost invariably attributable to Thai suppression forces.^{16/} But on 18 February 1968, a USAF CH-3C helicopter received ground fire in Sakon Nakhon Province,^{17/} one of two high CT density areas in NE Thailand; the other had historically been Nakhon Phanom (NKP). An American Explosive Ordnance Demolition (EOD) specialist was hit in the leg by what was later found to be a Soviet-type 7.62-mm bullet--such as was fired by the AK-47 assault rifle. Foreign Technology Division (FTD) specialists suggested that the bullet may have been manufactured in China.

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CHAPTER IV

U.S. ASSISTANCE

Strategically and tactically, the kingdom of Thailand was crucial to U.S. objectives in Southeast Asia (SEA). In the short run, Thailand was being used by the U.S. as a relatively safe haven from which communist supply routes to forces in South Vietnam could be harassed. ^{1/}

Communist China and North Vietnam eyed with malice the increasing commitment of the Royal Thai Government to the suppression of communist objectives in SEA. Equally alarming to the communist camp was the increasing warmth of US/Thai relations. When Thailand deployed its crack Black Panther Division to SVN, simultaneously agreeing to the buildup of U.S. strike bases on her soil, the communist timetable for the takeover of the "rice bowl of the Orient" was accelerated. ^{2/}

From the American standpoint, the increased insurgent activity in Thailand was a double-edged sword: the danger to Thai sovereignty was second in immediacy to the threat to U.S. resources and personnel. It became obvious that the RTG would be hard-pressed to contain the escalating insurgent activity without extensive assistance. ^{3/} U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Information Service, and the U.S. Army had already been working in the field of rural development in NE Thailand. Recommendations by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) resulted in a complete reorganization of Thai counterinsurgency forces. (See Chapter VI.) Other U.S. agencies, including USAF, were to have key roles in supporting Thailand's COIN operations.

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The USAF role was to train the RTAF in Special Air Warfare (SAW) tactics and to conduct a civic action program in conjunction with USAID. In April 1966, the 606th Air Commando Squadron (ACS) was deployed to Thailand to accomplish these missions. The squadron, located at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, was also charged with conducting combat operations over Laos.^{4/} The diverse nature of these three operations strained the resources and complicated the "command and control" functions of the commander. (See Chapter V.)

By December 1966, the 606th ACS had Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) in place with four RTAF composite squadrons at Koke Kathiem (Sq 20), Chiang Mai (Sq 21), Ubon (Sq 22), and Udorn (Sq 23). Liaison officers were integrated with the Thai Air Operations Center, the Border Patrol Police (BPP), and CMP units at Mukdahan/Sakon Nakhon and NKP. Medical civic action teams had been deployed into remote villages.^{5/} Of primary concern to the Thai in this area was the manning of health centers in the Northeast.

The MTTs trained RTAF crews in helilift operations, psyops, reconnaissance and ordnance delivery. While RTAF Military Assistance Program (MAP) helicopters were being used to train Thai crews, no resources were available to support suppression operations. This gap reached the attention of the American Ambassador who discussed the problem with Gen. William C. Westmoreland (then Commander, MACV). He suggested the normal complement of four helicopters coming in with the 606th ACS be increased to 25 on a temporary basis. It was believed these aircraft could be withdrawn by January 1967, as the RTAF received additional resources from MAP allocations. The additional helicopters were supplied and furnished the interim helilift capability

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required.^{6/}

Certain complications relative to the temporary nature of this helicopter deployment arose, but the 606th ACS, and later the 56th ACS/SOW, were not without resources necessary to conduct their assigned missions.^{7/}

As the RTAF assumed their own helilift operations in support of suppression forces, they were also scheduled in January 1967 to conduct their own training.^{8/} However, USAF officials believed further SAW training was needed. During 1967, training was conducted at seven RTAF installations. In addition to the four original locations, training was conducted at NKP, Don Muang, and Sattahip. Aircraft included the UC-123, T-28D, U-10D and H-34. The curriculum ran the gamut from primary flight training through combat tactics.^{9/}

By late 1967, it was believed that the RTAF was quickly progressing in sophistication, and the phase-down of MTTs was scheduled to begin.^{10/} By the end of 1968, the only USAF training contingent remaining with the RTAF was at Koke Kathiem with RTAF Squadron 20. Even this function had been reduced to the level of an Advisory Team (AT) and was scheduled for withdrawal in early 1969.^{11/}

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From the beginning, USAF had been prepared to "put itself out of the Thai COIN business". U.S. policy held that Thailand's internal defense should remain entirely in Thai hands. The mission of USAF, along with other U.S. agencies, was to insure that the RTG had the resources and the know-how to cope with the accelerated communist insurgency. The Ambassador kept a close personal watch on U.S. involvement in Thai COIN activities, allowing U.S. forces to participate directly only on an emergency basis, such as the helilift stop-gap operations.^{12/}

While RTAF progressed rapidly in flight training, it took somewhat longer to create a willingness and an ability within the RTG to take over its own civic action (CA) program. Working out of NKP, the 606th ACS had stretched its health and sanitation projects into some of the most remote areas of NE Thailand. The teams worked in the most sensitive villages, and made significant inroads in the "battle for men's minds". By 1968, joint Thai-US civic action teams were welcomed in villages, which had previously^{13/} been inaccessible to them due to communist activity and sympathizers. Apparently the good reputation of CA teams had preceded them to such an extent that CTs dared not harass their operations.

Late in 1968, it was still uncertain whether the RTG had the enthusiasm and resources necessary to take over the civic action projects.^{14/} As it had in the realm of flight training, USAF began gradually to diminish its assistance, in the hope of forcing the RTG to fill the gap. The 606th ACS began to reduce its drug supply to a level which the RTG could match.^{15/} Civic Action personnel continued to operate in the health centers, but Thais were

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encouraged more and more to work on their own, with a view toward eventual U.S. withdrawal. On 16 October 1968, a plan was drawn up to effect a systematic withdrawal of U.S. personnel from the seven centers which they operated on a "live-in" basis.^{16/} Embassy officials later announced the plan would be implemented on 1 February 1969; total withdrawal was envisioned by 1 February 1970.^{17/}

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CHAPTER V

COMMAND AND CONTROL

"The basic command structure for Thailand-based forces and the command relationship to the American Embassies in Thailand and Laos, COMUS-MACTHAI, and the Royal Thai Air Force would provide the National War College with sufficient problem areas to keep them busy for an extended period of time...." 1/

-- Maj. Gen. William C. Lindley, Jr.

The Deputy Commander, 7AF/13AF, was the senior U.S. military representative in Thailand. Responsible to 7AF (for operations) and 13AF (logistics), he nevertheless had authority to deal directly with the U.S. Ambassadors in Bangkok and Vientiane and the Commander-in-Chief, RTAF. ^{2/} His relationship with USMACTHAI was unique and complicated by Parkinsonian intrigue. ^{3/} Although the Deputy Commander, 7AF/13AF was not a component of MACTHAI, USAF officials believed that MACTHAI was interested in: (1) strengthening U.S. Army involvement in Thailand to the exclusion of USAF forces; and (2) directly influencing USAF units involved in Thai COIN operations. ^{4/} Early in 1968, General Lindley questioned the issuance of MACTHAI directives to USAF Thai-based units. A legal reading of the Terms of Reference for MACTHAI/JUSMAG assured him that such directives were "a legal nullity" unless repromulgated by 13AF. ^{5/}

The complexity of the command and control structure in Thailand reached down to wing and squadron level. The diverse missions of the

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606th ACS and its parent, the 56th Special Operations Wing, led to some command and control problems. One of these was discussed by Col. Roland K. McCoskrie in his End-of-Tour report:^{6/}

"Supervision of such a multitude of tasks becomes such a monumental task for the austere wing headquarters staff. As a result, it is necessary to delegate more responsibility and authority to the squadron level than is found to be true in normal tactical fighter wings. This enhances the possibility of uncoordinated actions which places more importance on the selection of strong, expert squadron commanders."

The problem was appreciated by the Deputy Commander, 7AF/13AF. In mid-1968 a proposal was submitted to 13AF to transfer the 606th ACS, less combat elements, to Udorn RTAFB, with direct control by 7AF/13AF.^{7/} It was believed this would "streamline" the 56th SOW, while aligning civic action functions more closely to the PACAF Civic Action Program promulgated in September 1967. It was hoped that with the eventual withdrawal of the 606th ACS personnel from the field, they could be used to augment the civic action/community relations programs being implemented around the seven Thai bases at which USAF forces were housed.^{8/} The Embassy had been placing increasing emphasis on base CA/CR problems to the exclusion of civic action in the field. At a conference held in Bangkok in November 1968 to discuss the civic action programs, Embassy officials made it clear that the Country Team wanted the USAF and the USA out of the CA field per se.^{9/} The new concept--to insure base security--was discussed in the CHECO study, "Civic Actions in Thailand, 1964-1968".

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CHAPTER VI

ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT REACTION

Even while it was recognized that U.S. presence in Thailand aggravated the dangers of insurgency and (communist) infiltration, it was agreed that the parallel problems of countering the insurgents and limiting the infiltration should remain solely in the hands of the Royal Thai Government. U.S. policy precluded American involvement in activities which could be construed as direct support of Thai internal security operations.^{1/} Nevertheless, it must be recognized that much of the RTG's counterinsurgency effort was developed under the prodding and with the assistance of American Advisors. Hence the overall RTG posture in the realm of counterinsurgency had a distinct American flavor.^{2/}

The first recognized year of serious insurgent activity in Thailand was 1965. The RTG reacted by reorganizing its counterinsurgency forces to make them more directly responsive to the threat. A Communist Suppression Headquarters (CSH) was organized and placed under the Deputy Prime Minister (who was also Minister of the Interior and Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army).^{3/} The CSH was an inter-ministerial body, which included the Deputy Minister of Defense, the Director General of the Thai National Police, and the Undersecretary of State.

The first operational level under the CSH was the Communist Suppression Operations Center (CSOC), located at Bangkok. Below the CSOC were regional

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commands called Communist Suppression Headquarters Forward (CSHF). Also at regional level were Joint Security Centers, which initially collected and compiled intelligence data from provincial sources, and later took on operational responsibilities.^{4/}

At provincial level, operations centers--known as civilian/military/police units--were established under respective governors. A typical CMP unit had 1,600 security troops, including an airborne company, special forces teams, border patrol and marine police, and as many as 300 volunteer defense corps personnel.^{5/} Generally, security operations of all government agencies were coordinated and integrated with the Provincial CMP unit. An exception to this was the fierce battle against the Meo Communists in January 1968, when operational control was given to the 3d Army Forward.

There were four military or quasi-military forces available for use in counterinsurgency operations:^{6/}

Royal Thai Army (RTA) with a force of 85,000 men organized into four major military area commands. (Until November 1967, only about 2.5% of the RTA was being actively used in COIN efforts.) The RTA was charged with the territorial defense and support of SEATO commitments.

Royal Thai Navy (RTN) with 23,100 men including a 7,500 man Marine Corps. RTN's primary responsibility was the coastal defense; a secondary mission was internal security.

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ORGANIZATION OF SUPPRESSION FORCES

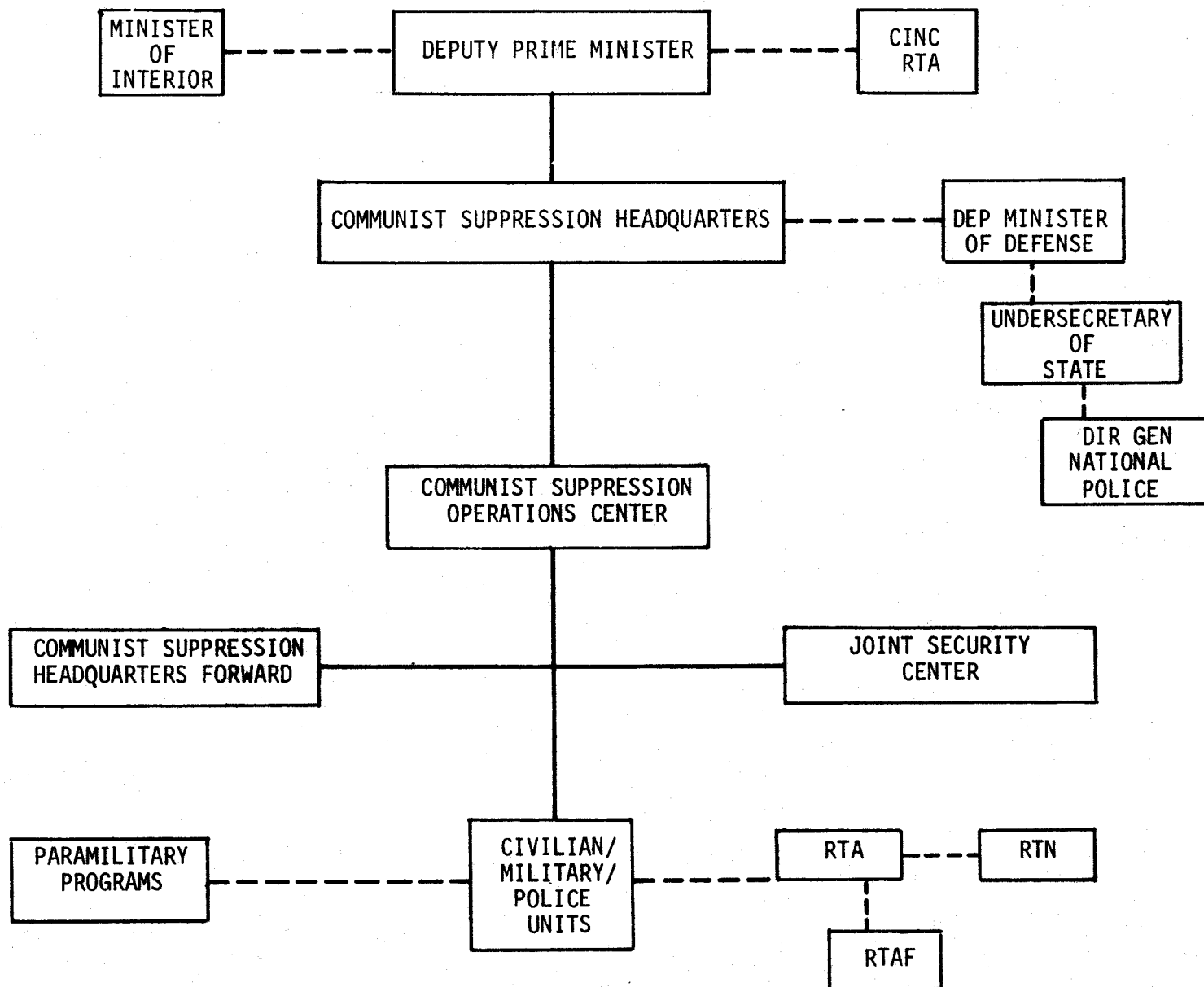


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Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) with 19,000 men assigned to six wings throughout Thailand. Aircraft included approximately:

AVRO:	1	C-123:	7	F-86:	19	O-1:	6
T-33:	12	C-45:	2	H-34:	35	Chipmunk:	17
T-6:	61	T-37:	7	C-47:	18	F-5:	10
H-43:	7	T-28:	46			U-10(L-28):	9

The RTAF was responsible for support of COIN operations.

Thai National Police (TNP) with three branches:

- (1) Provincial Police (PP) with 30,000 men;
- (2) Border Patrol Police (BPP) with 6,800 men; and
- (3) Aerial Reinforcement Unit (ARU) with 250 men.

The PP was charged with (provincial) internal security.

There were also five paramilitary programs designated to provide security for remote villages: ^{7/}

Volunteer Defense Corps (VDC) had about 3,700 men stationed in 370 villages. This organization was the major armed reserve force (national guard) of Thailand. VDC units were generally led by a PP cadre; they were often used to complement CMP forces.

Village Security Officers (VSO) and Peoples Assistance Teams (PAT) had about 1200 men serving on active duty. VSO were phuyaibans (elected village chiefs), and other key villagers who were trained and armed to: (1) protect villagers; (2) procure intelligence; (3) provide armed government presence; and (4) assist overall COIN effort. PAT received political and motivational training. They were involved in village improvement projects, psychological operations, and intelligence gathering.

Village Protection Teams (VPT). This was special program initiated by the Governor of Changwat Ubon. It was similar to the nationwide VDC program but its Province, members served only within their own villages.

Census Aspiration (CA) was a village level intelligence collection effort. One unarmed man operated within his own village. CA cadres were trained in intelligence gathering techniques.

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Village Security Force (VSF). This program began in 1968 to form groups of local villagers capable of providing armed protection and stimulating self-help projects. Plans called for training 20,000 VSF members by 1972.

It was hoped that these paramilitary programs would separate the insurgents from their base of support for manpower, food, and intelligence. Most of the programs also involved civic action projects designed to enhance the RTG's image at the village level. By 1968, the five programs fielded more than 5,000 locally-recruited volunteers. They were deployed in teams of 10-12 members in about 750 of the 15,000 villages in Northeast Thailand.

Reports of communist insurgent activity rose appreciably during 1965 and 1966. However, this was not entirely due to increased activity on the part of the communists. The new organization was paying off in terms of intelligence collection.^{8/} Responding to its increased awareness of communist activity and the intensification of that activity, the RTG formulated four plans designed to: (1) eliminate known CT strongholds; (2) keep existing CTs from being resupplied or reinforced from Laos; (3) prevent insurgency from spreading into new areas; and (4) prevent Chinese/Burmese Communists from opening a new front against the RTG.^{9/} The plans were:

0910 Plan commonly called "The Dry Season Operation" was implemented in January 1967. Its purpose was to defeat insurgents in the Northeast by military and civic action operations and to provide village security within sensitive areas.

111 Plan covered the Thai-Lao border from Chiang Rai to Ubon Province. The object was to slow down and/or halt the infiltration of personnel and material.

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Village Self-Help Insurgency Prevention Plan involved strengthening villages which bordered on troubled areas.

Back Door Plan covered the Thai-Burma border from Chiang Rai to Rayong.

By the end of 1967, large Army units had been deployed to the Northeast under the 0910 Plan, and were said to have splintered communist bands in that area, driving them from base camps and bringing about a notable increase in CT casualties and voluntary surrenders.^{10/} However, as CTs were forced to move their bases of operations they began to rebuild their infrastructure in new areas. Thus, RTG resources were forced to expand into these new areas, while maintaining an active force in the areas of historic sensitivity.^{11/}

About the same time, and probably connected to the RTG push in the northeast (northeasterners were thought to have joined the movement in the North and were said to be acting as couriers and recruiters), the first awareness came of the inroads made by the communists among the Meo hill tribes.^{12/} In December 1967, Third Army Forward began moving units into the north.^{13/} By January, the 3d Army Commander, who had been given operational control of countersubversion forces in Nan and Chiang Rai provinces, requested permission to proclaim martial law (technically in effect since 1958 in Thailand, but never enforced), in the troubled areas.^{14/} The situation in the north was termed "extremely frustrating". It was said that an estimated 200 insurgents were able to tie down approximately 2,000 military and security forces.^{15/} Morale among RTA troops in Nan was said to be poor because of lack of adequate helicopter support.

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RTG reaction to the Meo Communists was considered to be excessive.^{16/} Villagers were moved into refugee camps and airstrikes were made by the RTAF against the abandoned villages.^{17/} RTG rationale was that crops and food stuffs might otherwise fall into communist hands.^{18/} American officials believed such heavy-handed treatment would only serve to further alienate the tribal peoples.^{19/} By April, the RTG was beginning to appreciate the American position. The CSOC sent word to the Governor of Chiang Rai that no further resettlement would be attempted. American officials doubted that the move came soon enough to placate the tribesmen,^{20/} because the communists had moved fast to capitalize on RTG over-reaction. The CTs claimed all Meos who evacuated according to the government order were placed under arrest. Elderly Meos were executed, they said, while able-bodied persons were employed in forced labor camps. All young Meo girls, according to the communists, were sent for "indiscriminate sexual intercourse with Americans".

By March 1968, RTA officials were describing the insurgency situation in Nan and Chiang Rai Provinces as "far more serious than the situation in the Northeast".^{21/} This was attributed to "rugged terrain, accessibility of the Laos border, the remoteness of the area and the better arms and direction of the Northern insurgents". A report from Colonel Sierma, Acting Chief of Staff, 3d Army Forward, epitomized the dire situation in the North. He said that only seven CT casualties could be confirmed by actual body count, while the 3d Army suffered 45 killed, 175 wounded and

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1 missing. ^{22/} (RTG J-2 reported 69 killed, 161 wounded from December 1967 to May 1968.) Further insurgent casualties were indicated by blood trails but no estimate of the number of wounded CTs was given. ^{23/}

Another RTG official said the insurgency (in the North) was "serious but manageable." He complained of uncoordinated tactics between the BPP and the RTA and said "inadequate exploitation of hill tribe counterinsurgency capabilities, lack of adequate budget, poor leadership and limited support" all contributed to deficiencies in RTG efforts to counter the insurgent threat.

Through the end of 1968, the RTG continued to react (and over-react) to insurgent activity. In the North, suppression forces continued to suffer heavy losses at the hands of fierce Meo tribesmen. ^{24/} In the Northeast, enforcement of the 0910 Plan seemed to have forced the communists at least temporarily to break up into smaller bands and to concentrate on food collection. ^{25/} Elsewhere in the country, things were relatively quiet.

Any evaluation of the RTG's reaction to its insurgency problem would have to take into consideration: (1) the limited resources available to combat insurgency in four widely separate areas; (2) organizational difficulties within the suppression forces and the RTG itself; and (3) the myriad of ethnic groups within Thailand and basic Siamese reaction to those groups.

Suppression operations were beset with petty rivalries and individual dissatisfactions. A behind-the-scenes power struggle between the RTA and the CSOC frequently resulted in lack of coordination and misdirected effort. ^{26/}

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The several agencies ostensibly integrated in the CMP units frequently found it difficult to coordinate efforts. According to General Bond:^{27/}

"It does not appear that the CMP organizers have yet attained a capability to overcome the tendency toward autonomy within these (COIN) activities, nor to solve fully the problems of communications, planning and execution of operations."

Individual dissatisfaction was manifested by malingering and even obstruction of programs.^{28/} The problem was aggravated by disparities in living standards, etc., between the "integrated" services. This was particularly true in the field of paramilitary organizations, where programs often overlapped, while individual compensation fluctuated wildly.^{29/}

The third factor in the evaluation of RTG reaction, that of ethnic groups and their treatment, was very complex and deep-rooted. The three ethnic groups most frequently associated with insurgent activity were the Chinese, the Vietnamese refugees, and the Meo tribesmen.^{30/} As previously discussed, these three groups were often harassed by government sanction.

Probably by virtue of their duration in Thailand and their involvement in much of the commercial life of the country, the Chinese were the least harassed of the three groups.^{31/} Still, those who retained Chinese names and customs were not permitted the privileges of citizenship. An innovated primogeniture developed among the Chinese: first-born sons were given Thai names and sent to Thai schools, so that family businesses could be registered in their names.

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The Vietnamese refugees were the next most oppressed people. Thai attitude toward the Viets was exemplified by the Governor of Sakon Nakhon Province in September 1968, when he met with Vietnamese leaders over the question of their resistance to the census. He pointed out that they were guests of Thailand but "they acted as though they were the owners of the country". The Governor rejected the Vietnamese explanation that they feared the census would be used to repatriate them to South Vietnam. (They similarly did not want to go to North Vietnam.) The Governor said if they were sent to SVN they would kill the South Vietnamese, and if NVN would accept them, he would "ship them off in five minutes".^{32/}

Despite stumbling over their own organizational feet and alienating at least three admittedly dangerous ethnic groups, plus having only severely limited resources, the Royal Thai Government was able to keep the insurgency movement within somewhat controllable proportions. The best evaluation of the RTG's effectiveness was the observation that the insurgency was kept, during 1967 and 1968, at a "serious but manageable" level.

In summary, the Royal Thai Government's reaction to its insurgency problem was manifested in reorganization of suppression forces and concerted programs designed to contain, if not eliminate, the subversion. Its goals were: (1) eliminate strongholds; (2) prevent reinforcement; (3) prevent spreading; and (4) cover the Thai-Burma border.

With the possible exception of the border program, it is impossible to say categorically whether any of these goals were actually consummated. Since no large-scale invasion of Chinese/Burmese terrorists was experienced, it

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could be surmised at least that program was successful. There is some question, however, as to whether the threat of large-scale invasion ever existed in proportion to the resources required to counter it. Ascertaining the point-of-diminishing-returns in the allocation of government resources was a guessing game which complicated the entire range of suppression goals.

As with the Thai-Burma border program, the extent of infiltration across the Mekong was a matter of some conjecture. Even more nebulous was the extent to which the RTG program actually prevented infiltration and reinforcement.

The attempt to eliminate CT strongholds and the program to prevent spreading of the insurgency were inter-related and self-complicating. The very act of storming known strongholds forced the CTs to move into new areas. Thus, new strongholds were created in areas which had previously known little or no insurgency.

On the plus side of the ledger, the RTG's growing sophistication in managing civic actions and providing military countermeasures was undeniable. Of greater significance was the Thais' awareness of the problem and their willingness to combat insurgency where it thrived: at the village level. Even the over-reaction, which had characterized the Royal Thai Government's efforts in the past, was mitigated, not only because of American influence, but through institutionalism of the suppression forces.

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GLOSSARY

AAA	Antiaircraft Artillery
ACS	Air Commando Squadron
ALO	Air Liaison Officer
AOC	Area Operations Center
ARU	Aerial Reinforcement Unit
AT	Advisory Team
BPP	Border Patrol Police
CA	Civic Action; Census Aspiration
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CMP	Civilian Military Police
COIN	Counterinsurgency
COMUSMACTHAI	Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Thailand
CONUS	Continental United States
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
CSH	Communist Suppression Headquarters
CSHF	Communist Suppression Headquarters Forward
CSOC	Communist Suppression Operations Center
CT	Communist Terrorist
DASC	Direct Air Support Center
DOD	Department of Defense
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Demolition
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JUSMAG	Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group
MACTHAI	Military Assistance Command, Thailand
MAP	Military Assistance Program
MTT	Mobile Training Team
NKP	Nakhon Phanom
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
PAT	Peoples Assistance Team
PCS	Permanent Change of Station
PP	Provincial Police
Psyops	Psychological Operations

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RTA	Royal Thai Army
RTAF	Royal Thai Air Force
RTAFB	Royal Thai Air Force Base
RTG	Royal Thai Government
RTN	Royal Thai Navy
SAW	Special Air Warfare
SEA	Southeast Asia
SEAITACS	Southeast Asia Integrated Tactical Air Control System
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SOS	Special Operations Squadron
TACC	Tactical Air Control Center
TDY	Temporary Duty
TNP	Thai National Policy
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VDC	Volunteer Defense Corps
VPT	Village Protection Team
VSF	Village Security Force
VSO	Village Security Officer

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